DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 222 034 EC 150 304

AUTHOR Siegel, Gerald
TITLE English and the Learning-Disabled Student: A Survey of Research.
PUB DATE Apr 82
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the College English Association (13th, Houston, TX, April 15-17, 1982).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Students; *English Instruction; Higher Education; *Intervention; *Learning Disabilities; Literature Reviews; *Student Characteristics; *Student Needs; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

The author reviews literature on teaching the learning disabled (LD) in college English classrooms. He notes work by V. Davis which suggests the following methods and techniques: (1) reinforce coping techniques the students have already developed; (2) provide help with reading tasks through summaries of vocabulary; (3) allow taping of classes (to overcome notetaking problems); (4) allow oral compositions and tests; and (4) permit aid of a reader (as a visually impaired student might use). Cited is literature which categorizes learning disability into three areas (general, visual, and auditory) and which suggests classroom methods for circumventing these problems such as encouraging use of the typewriter. Considered are three areas of intervention (identification, individualized education, and remediation of associated disorders) needed by LD adults, according to S. Cox. The more theoretical study, by R. Mosby, suggests a de-emphasis of remediation skills and use of whatever instructional strategy works to give the student needed life skills. Cited is research which points out the need to modify overall test procedures for LD students, such as limiting the number of alternative responses. Also noted is case study research (conducted by C. Miller) which provides a description of writing related problems to be expected in working with college LD students, and other case study research which provides insight into stress experiences of adults with severe reading deficiencies. Literature on various programs, including the Learning Opportunities Center (Brooklyn, New York), is also reviewed. It is concluded that the absence of extensive literature dealing with the college English teacher and the LD student may prove that awareness of learning disabilities, especially in higher education, is a recent phenomenon. (SW)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED222034

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

# English and the Learning-Disabled Student: A Survey of Research

Gerald Siegel
York College of Pennsylvania

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Gerald Siegel
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Students with learning disabilities constitute a group of non-traditional students with a difference--an invisible difference. The passage of Public Law 94-142 made them important to elementary and secondary schools; as a result of programs designed to help them learn, many are now arriving at college gates and walking through into our composition and literature classes.

What can we, as classroom English instructors, do to meet the needs of this new population?

First, simply recognize them rather than retreat into either a defense of maintaining standards or bemoaning the loss of those standards.

Second, help these students learn. After all, that's what teachers do.

Learning disability defies simple definition. (See handout, part I) Most definitions, however, agree that LD students typically possess average or above average native intelligence; that is, they do have the ability to learn. (Although Cruickshank and others disagree over this restriction, as a practical matter, for college students, it seems valid.)

In the past, LD students were often unlikely to make it to college. Now, they are arriving, usually having selected a college with certain attributes that place it in one of the following categories:

1. a college with a formal program existing to help disabled learners. (See handout, part II)
2. a college with some form of developmental studies program, not specifically for LD students, but possibly helpful for them. (Again, see handout--part III--for articles describing a sample of such schools.)
3. colleges without specific programs, but characterized by such qualities as:

EC150301

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the College English Association (13th, Houston, TX, April 15-17, 1982)

a. admissions standards that permit accepting LD students with weak records
b. a faculty interested in working with individual differences--preferably trained to help and at least sympathetic to the special needs of LD students
c. an overall campus environment supportive of the progress of disabled learners.

4. colleges close to the students' homes, where they can receive support services, not necessarily (although possibly) from the school, but from other sources (parents, local agencies, etc.)
5. colleges without specific programs or concern for LD students.

We're most likely to find ourselves facing disabled learners in one of the middle three situations. But the literature on teaching LD students largely ignores college situations and, aside from research in reading, ignores the English classroom. The rest of this paper is an attempt to provide some guidance by sampling materials that do exist.

Vivian Davis' overview of dyslexic and language LD college students provides a useful starting point for teachers unfamiliar with learning disabilities. She first identifies symptoms--for example, problems with spelling, grammar transformations, handwriting, and reading--characteristic of such learners and offers suggestions for following up those initial clues (through data sheets, short written assignments and conferences, or taped messages from student to teacher). Classroom management techniques are listed in a section of general "do's" and "don't's" for the composition teacher confronted with LD students; these include not trying to teach them to read and attempting to include non-print media where possible. The paper concludes with specific methods and techniques, including:

1. reinforce coping techniques the students have already developed
2. provide help with reading tasks through summaries or vocabulary lists, adapted text versions, media approaches, or peer help
3. allow taping of classes (to overcome note-taking problems)
4. allow oral compositions and tests
5. permit aid of a reader (as a visually impaired student might use).

A second worthwhile starting point, Kahn's discussion is really an extended detailed outline which characterizes the LD student under three

categories of disability (general, visual, auditory) and then suggests "classroom methods for circumventing these learning problems" for each category. Of special concern for English teachers are visual disabilities, marked by behaviors such as mechanical problems in completing objective examinations, preference for auditory (over visual) activities, and a variety of problems with oral and silent reading. The disabled learner may also have problems with spelling and "visual-motor problems when printing, writing, [or] copying. . . ." Sample compensation suggestions for the teacher include extensive use of oral student presentations, encouraging use of the typewriter (for tests as well as papers), providing adequate class time for written work, and developing a student file of frequently misspelled words. Suggested compensation strategies for reading difficulties include explaining the purpose of reading assignments, providing carefully sequenced guide questions, employing parallel (but lower reading level) materials, using "a ruler or blank white index card" to help students keep in place while reading, and having students simultaneously read silently and listen to a taped version of the material. Kahn provides similar specifics in all three of his disability categories.

Sheralyn Cox pays special attention to the problems of the adult, as her title suggests, and cautions that most LD research has emphasized helping children and neglected the needs of adults, many of whom only discover their disabilities late in life. "Remediation and compensation for the learning disabled adult," she claims, "requires three areas of intervention: (1) identification, (2) individualized adult education, and (3) remediation of associated disorders." Individualized adult education involves the English teacher in helping with both remediation and compensation.

Unlike the LD child, the learning disabled adult is a poor candidate for mainstreaming, since he realizes his differences; it's too late to avoid that

feeling. On the other hand, because of this awareness and because he knows what he wants to do about his disabilities, the adult should be actively involved in his own testing and in selection of remedial approaches. The instructor becomes a resource rather than an authority figure.

Compensation techniques suggested resemble those used for younger LD students (for example, use of readers and typewriters). Dictation (through shorthand or dictating machine) and transcription by an assistant may overcome spelling problems, while "notetaking and a structured program of vocabulary development" may aid word or phrase recall. Cox suggests that support for the special needs of the adult disabled learner be provided by appropriate agencies, much as the needs of other handicapped individuals are met by private and public resources.

In a more theoretical study that still includes practical suggestions, Robert Mosby suggests a de-emphasis on remediation of skills. Instead of struggling to bring a student, step by step, through various skill levels and up to an appropriate level, he proposes alternative instructional approaches emphasizing "acquisition of the knowledge and concepts necessary for life through whatever instructional strategy works for each student."

Developmental Bypass instructional technology, Mosby claims, uses alternate educational strategies to bypass developmental deficits and achieve educational goals. Although he explains his methodology within a neurological context, his suggestions for compensation resemble those of other studies. After the opening theoretical discussion, he concludes with specific recommendations for five particular handicaps of interest to English teachers:

1. dyslexia (reading in reference to symbol recall)
2. ordering problems (e.g., spelling, following directions)
3. dysgraphia (problems in using cursive writing)
4. aural receptive dysphasia (apparently misunderstanding oral communication)
5. expressive dysphasia (problems with the student's own oral expression)

Harrington and Morrison and Dorothy Campbell examine strategies for specific situations. The former study points out practical difficulties in persuading teachers to change overall test procedures for students with learning disabilities. However, objective tests can be modified slightly to allow these students to demonstrate their knowledge. (The authors suggest, for example, limiting the number of alternative responses.) Essay tests pose more of a problem, tape recorded answers and a pre-test student-instructor conference about the questions can help.

Campbell tested one compensation strategy--the use of a typewriter to compensate for writing problems. Students in the sample, who used the "hunt and peck" method in their typing, registered larger gains in reading vocabulary skills than did a control group using handwriting to prepare their worksheets. While the sample group consisted of elementary-age children, Campbell specifies no particular age level, and the technique (as other sources have noted) can be applied to college-level LD students.

Several studies rely upon case histories to present characteristics of the postsecondary LD student. These seem especially useful as a means of orienting instructors accustomed to a more traditional student clientele.

Miller and his colleagues recount the ways in which disability became evident in the work of three college students: the account describes the problems they encountered in spelling, writing, and reading, and goes on to explain the roles of faculty and of the college counseling center in helping such students. Specific techniques are included. (For example, correcting and editing sentences became easier for a student who left 3-4 lines between sentences at the rough draft stage of a writing assignment.) Overall, this study provides a useful description of writing-related problems to be expected in working with college LD students.

McClelland, through case studies, shows the problems encountered by two adults with specific language disabilities. More an insight into emotional

stress experienced by adults with severe reading deficiencies than a study of the role of the English teacher, this article is valuable primarily as background reading.

Also valuable as a background study, the volume by Cruickshank, Morse, and Johns is a general study of the problems of the adult disabled learner that dramatically emphasizes the importance of helping such students. Language disabilities and other problems are recounted in a series of seven case studies (five of them extensive) of LD adults who had been seen earlier by Cruickshank and colleagues at the Institute for the Study of Mental Retardation and Related Disabilities of the University of Michigan.

Two additional works may best be viewed as position papers encouraging help for the learning disabled. Rawson emphasizes the need for assisting dyslexics to overcome their "ineptitude with language skills" while Sullivan claims that colleges, because they now accept LD students, incur the responsibility for helping these students succeed (much as they earlier had a responsibility to provide remedial courses for weak students.) English departments might be involved with providing reading instruction and study skills courses as part of such a support program.

While most schools will probably, at least in the near future, continue relying on the efforts of individual students and instructors or of general learning assistance centers to compensate for or remediate learning disabilities, a few institutions offer more. They offer specific programs for the learning disabled. Unfortunately, despite the availability of ERIC as a means of disseminating information, accounts of such programs are rare. (Some of these colleges are included in the list in part II of the handout.)

Such a program, the "Learning Opportunities Center" at Kingsborough Community College (Brooklyn, New York), was, according to Dorothy Siegel, "designed as a model demonstration program for meeting the varied needs of

the learning disabled and emotionally disturbed . . . ." (The three-year program began in 1978; as of February, 1982, no assessment was listed in standard bibliographic sources.) The participants and the program are described in detail; mentioned are assessment, development of Individualized Educational Plans, a tutoring program, an Audio-Tutorial Lab, a social skills workshop, and compensation strategies, including some for English, language arts, and reading.

Barsch describes a program developed in 1977 to meet the educational needs of adult LD students at Ventura College (Ventura, CA). Available to students were four courses developed to help learning skills and adjustment, and the services of the college's learning disabilities center. The program, while not specifically designed for English, appears potentially useful as general support for high-risk students; further, initial contact with students was made through "core curriculum classes."

A program begun at Wright State University in 1974 (described by Bireley and Manley) again is primarily compensatory, not remedial. Emphasizing use of existing "services to circumvent the learning problem" rather than relying upon extensive remediation, it provides three main kinds of support services: academic, tutorial, and counseling/advising. Language arts skills are involved with the academic and tutorial support areas. Specific support strategies put into action suggestions made theoretically in other studies: examination proctors are available to LD students, for example, and texts can be put on cassettes for students with reading disabilities.

Spear provides an overview of a program for LD adults developed at Orange Coast College (CA) in 1975-76. The paper gives a statistical picture of the program, as well as a definition and description of the learning center student. The basic materials of the program deal with mathematical, reading, and cognitive skills.

Roueche and Snow present a broad picture of remedial and developmental programs in general, although not specifically of learning disability programs. Their account, although not concerned in detail with English programs, makes significant observations about what support programs ought to offer, and describes a number of actual programs.

The absence of an extensive literature dealing with the college English teacher and the learning disabled student may prove simply that awareness of learning disabilities, especially in higher education, is a recent phenomenon. But the paucity of such research also suggests a need for greater sharing within the profession of what we are doing for such students, and a need for more creativity and innovation in meeting the needs of such special learners.

English and the Learning Disabled College Student
Gerald Siegel, York College of Pennsylvania
1982 meeting of College English Association, Houston, Texas

I. Two sample definitions of learning disability

From the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, Public Law 94-142, rpt. Brown, 1980, p. 9:

The term "children with specific learning disabilities" means those children who have a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in imperfect ability to listen, think speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. Such disorders include such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Such term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing or motor handicaps, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

According to Osman (1979, p. 168), "the U.S. Office of Education [sic] uses the following definition of learning disabilities as a national guideline in allocating funds for the education of the handicapped: 'Children with special learning disabilities exhibit a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written language. These may be manifested in disorders of listening, thinking, talking, reading, writing, spelling, or arithmetic. They include conditions which have been referred to as perceptual handicap, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, developmental aphasia, etc. They do not include learning problems which are due primarily to visual, hearing or motor handicaps, to mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or to environmental disadvantage.'"

II. A sampling of colleges accepting LD students. Many adapt admissions standards and/or curriculum for these students. (Compiled from Osman, 1979, pp. 181-2 and A Listing . . . ., 1980, pp. 11-12)

Adelphi U., Garden City, NY 11530
American International C., Springfield, MA 01109
Arizona State U., Tempe, AZ 85281
Augusta C., Augusta, GA 30904
Bradford C., Bradford, MA 01830
Brandywine Jr. C. (Concord Pike Campus), Wilmington, DE 19807
Central Florida C.C., Ocala, FL 32670
College of the Ozarks, Clarksville, AR 72830
Colorado Mountain C., Glenwood Springs, CO 81461
Curry C., Milton, MA 02186
Eastern Illinois U., Charleston, IL 61920
Ellen Cushing Jr. C., Bryn Mawr, PA 19010
Hagerstown Jr. C., Hagerstown, MD 21740
Harper C., Palatine, IL 60067
Howard U., Washington, DC 20001
Johnson and Wales Business C., Providence, RI 02903

Kendall C., Evanston, IL 60201
Kingsborough C.C., Brooklyn, NY 11235
Lincoln C., Lincoln, IL 62656
New England Trade Institute of Manchester, NH 03101
New York U., School of Educ. (Para-Educator Center for Young Adults), New York, NY 10003
Northern Arizona U., Flagstaff, AZ 86001
Oklahoma U., Norman, OX 73069
Southern Illinois U., Carbondale, IL 62901
Southern Vermont C., Bennington, VT 05201
Southwestern U., Georgetown, TX 78626
Triton C., River Grove, IL 60171
U. of Michigan at Dearborn, MI 48128
Westminster C., Fulton, MO 65251

III. Selected articles and works about developmental programs

Benenson, Thea Fuchs. "Remediation of Non-cognitive and Achievement Deficits in Disadvantaged College Freshmen--Project LINK." ERIC document ED 105 950. Bronx C.C., C.U.N.Y.

Bohr, Dorothy H. and Drothy Bray. "HELP: A Pilot Program for Community College Students." ERIC document ED 168 635. Sacramento City C.

"College in Hawaii Aids Busy Adults." New York Times, Jan. 2, 1974, p. 13. Kapiolani C.C.

Crawford, June J. "The Need for Basic Skills in Colleges and Universities." ERIC document ED 181 845. Niagara U., NY.

Cross, K. Patricia. Accent on Learning: Improving Instruction and Reshaping the Curriculum. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1976. LaGuardia C.C.

DeRowe, Cora. "The Learning Center: Glendale Community College Response to the Developmental Needs of 'New Students.'" ERIC document ED 179 266.

Fishman, Florence and Marjorie Dugan. "Alternative Programs and Services for the Non-Traditional Student." ERIC document ED 129 380. Community College of Philadelphia.

Ford, Marge L. "Penn Valley Community College Learning Skills Laboratory: A Resource Center for Developmental Education." In Developmental Education in Higher Education. Washington, DC: McManis Associates, 1976, pp. 18-22. Also ERIC document ED 134 272. Kansas City, MO.

Hampton, Peter J. "Communication Skills for Academically Disadvantaged Adults." Lifelong Learning, The Adult Years, 1 (Nov., 1977), 16-18, 24.

Jones, Roger E., "A Model for Minority Representation in Journalism." ERIC document ED 103 039. Jefferson C.C., Louisville, KY.

Kerstiens, Gene. "A Pilot Study to Assess the Effectiveness of the Recruitment Strategies and the Treatment of Non-Traditional Students Involved in a Short-Term Communications Course." ERIC document ED 130-745. El Camino C.C.

Lewis, George, and others. "Developmental Studies at Sandhills Community College." In Developmental Education in Higher Education. Washington, D.C.: McManis Associates, 1976, pp. 35-44. Also ERIC document ED 134 272.

Ortiz, Kenneth K., and others. "Third Annual Report, 1977-1978. Educational Testing and Learning Clinic Year-End Statistical Report." ERIC document ED 169 961. Orange Coast C., Costa Mesa, CA.

Rank, Janice. "One That Works: An Integrated Program of Basic Skills." ERIC document ED 173 762. Porterville C., CA.

Sherman, Deborah C. "An Innovative Community College Program Integrating the Fundamentals of Reading and Writing with a College Level Psychology Course." ERIC document ED 131 433.

Shor, Ira, ed. "Reading and Writing at Staten Island Community College." College English, 35 (May, 1974), 945-96. Now part of C.U.N.Y., College of Staten Island.

p. 4 Works cited or used in preparing this presentation:


Barsch, Jeffery. "Community College: New Opportunities for the LD Student." Academic Therapy, 15 (March, 1980), 467-70.

Bireley, Marlene and Eleyse Manley. "The Learning Disabled Student in a College Environment: A Report of Wright State University's Program." Journal of Learning Disabilities, 13 (Jan. 1980), 7-10.

Brown, Dale. Steps to Independence for People with Learning Disabilities. Washington, D.C.: Parents' Campaign for Handicapped Children and Youth, 1980.

Campbell, Dorothy D. "Typewriting Contrasted with Handwriting: A Circumvention Study of Learning Disabled Children." Journal of Special Education, 7 (Summer, 1973), 155-68.

Cox, Sheralyn. "The Learning-Disabled Adult." Academic Therapy, 13 (September, 1977), 79-86.

Cruickshank, William M., William C. Morse, and Jeannie S. Johns. Learning Disabilities: The Struggle from Adolescence to Adulthood. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1980.

Davis, Vivian I. "Including the Language Learning Disabled Student in the College English Class." ERIC document ED 114 823.

Harrington, Anne M. and Richard A. Morrison. "Modifying Classroom Exams for Secondary LD Students." Academic Therapy, 16 (May, 1981), 571-77.

Kahn, Michael S. "Learning Problems of the Secondary and Junior Colllege Learning Disabled Student: Suggested Remedies." Journal of Learning Disabilities, 13 (Oct., 1980), 445-49.

A Listing of Services for the Postsecondary LD Adult, 1st ed. Novato, CA: Academic Therapy Publications, 1980.

McClelland, Jane. "Shadow and Substance of Specific Language Disability." Bulletin of the Orton Society, 27 (1977), 187-92.

Miller, C. Dean, Donna L. McKinley, and Michael Ryan. "College Students: Learning Disabilities and Services." Personnel and Guidance Journal. 58 (Nov., 1979), 154-58.

Mosby, Robert J. "Secondary and College LD Bypass Strategies." Academic Therapy, 16 (May, 1981).

Osman, Betty B. Learning Disabilities: A Family Affair. New York: Random House, 1979.

Rawson, Margaret B. "Dyslexics as Adults: the Possibilities and the Challenge." Bulletin of the Orton Society, 27 (1977), 193-97.

Roueche, John E. and Jerry J. Snow. Overcoming Learning Problems. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1978.

Siegel, Dorothy. "Help for Learning Disabled College Students." American Education, 15 (July, 1979), pp. 17-21.

Spear, Barbara E. "Yes, There's Hope for Adults With Learning Disabilities." ERIC document ED 175 508.